(b) the details of such leases in the State of Goa; and

(c) the details of progress made by the C mmittee set up under the Chairmanship of P.V. Jaikrishnan by the Supreme Court to examine wildlife and forest matters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) As per information given by the Indian Bureau of Mines, a subordinate office of Ministry of Mines no mining lease falling in the wildlife area is currently in operation. Further, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has informed that no mining lease has been approved by MoEF in the Sanctuaries and National Parks after the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in its order dated 13.11.2000 in W.P. No. 337/95 and order dated 14.2.2000 in W.P. No. 202/95, directed that no dereservation of Sanctuaries and National Parks be effected and removal of trees, grasses etc. should not be done from the Sanctuaries and National Parks.

(c) The Hon'ble Supreme Court *vide* its order dated 9.5.2002 in Writ Petition (Civil) Nos. 202/95 and 171/96 directed that Central Empowered Committee (CEC) shall be constituted. Accordingly, the CEC was constituted on 3.6.2002, with Sri P.V. Jayakrishnan as Chairman. The Committee submits quarterly reports to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court monitors the progress of work assigned to the CEC directly.

Statehood to Pondicherry

*132. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Pondicherry Legislative Assembly passed unanimous resolutions on several occasions for grant of Statehood for Pondicherry;

(b) whether Government propose to give Statehood to Pondicherry in the light of the decision of Government to grant Statehood to Delhi; and

(c) if so, by when decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SWAMI CHINMAYANAND): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Legislative Assembly of Pondicherry has in its various Resolutions urged the Central Government to confer Statehood with a Special Category Status on Pondicherry. The Government of Pondicherry was accordingly in December, 1998 advised to forward a suitable proposal in justification of grant of Special Category Status. This proposal is, however, awaited from the Government of Pondicherry.

National Electricity Policy

*134. SHRI S. S. CHANDRAN:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Electricity Policy is being prepared;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the States have been consulted in this regard; and

(d) whether the policy is likely to take into account the regional compulsions of States?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE): (a) to (d) Section 3(1) of the Electricity Act, 2003 provides *inter alia* that the Central Government shall prepare the National Electricity Policy in consultation with the State Governments and the Central Electricity Authority (CEA). Views of the State Governments have been solicited on formulation of the National Electricity Policy.

Since the National Electricity Policy is of vital importance for the smooth development of the power sector, the Government of India has constituted a Task Force on Power Sector Investments and Reforms under the Chairmanship of Shri N.K. Singh, Member (Energy), Planning Commission, with the terms of reference *inter alia,* to evolve and recommend a National Electricity Policy.

The State Governments have been requested to give their views on the terms of reference of the Task Force. The Task Force also held a meeting with Energy/Power Secretaries of States on 4th December, 2003. Meetings have also been held with other stakeholders. The Task Force is deliberating on the issues involved.